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CONVOY ESCORT IN GUERRILLA COUNTRY: THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE

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Current STRAF military police rear area security missions include convoy escort--either in a directing, protecting or escorting role. In a low intensity conflict, the convoy escort mission may fall exclusively on STRAF military police. In a mid or high-intensity conflict, convoy escort forces can be a mix of combat-arms forces and military police or military police may have combat-arms forces attached to them for convoy escort. Conversely, military police may be part of a larger combat-arms convoy escort force. As U.S. forces deploy to areas of civil or ethnic strife such as Somalia, former Yugoslavia and Haiti, the potential for U.S. involvement in a guerrilla war grows. The success of the paramilitary forces in Somalia and in Bosnia suggest that it is in the best interests of U.S. Military Police to review the lessons of the last guerrilla war in which a super power was involved. The place was Afghanistan and the superpower was the now-defunct Soviet Union. The Soviets had a major problem conducting convoy escort against a determined guerrilla enemy. Their experiences may provide lessons which could assist in reviewing SOPs and writing doctrine for future U.S. convoy escort in mountain and desert terrain.

The Road War

The 1979-1989 Soviet-Afghan War pitted a modern, mechanized army against a strong-willed guerrilla force fighting on some of the most inhospitable terrain on earth. The war soon devolved into a fight for control of the limited lines of communication--the road network which connected the cities of Afghanistan with each other and to Pakistan and the Soviet Union (Map 1). The

Afghan guerrillas learned to ambush supply convoys and cut the roads. The Soviet Army, whose ultimate survival depended on its ability to resupply itself, fought to regain use of the roads. During the war, the Soviets lost 11,389 trucks, 1314 armored personnel carriers, 147 tanks, 433 artillery pieces and 1138 command vehicles/radios during their fight with the *mujahideen*¹ guerrillas. Many, if not most, of these losses occurred during the road war. The Afghan government and commercial contractors lost even more trucks to ambush during the war.

The Soviet Army relied on motorized rifle units, airborne units and even *spetsnaz*² units to perform convoy escort duty when required. Convoy escort was a rotating duty, and since the Soviet Army did not have a military police corps, there was no single point of contact nor institutional expertise in convoy escort. Consequently, Soviet Army units were constantly relearning the bloody lessons on convoy escort.



The more fire power the better

Afghanistan is three-fourths mountains and high plateau. Most mountain roads are very narrow, rise and fall frequently and have short-radius turns. They often border gorges and can be shut down by rock or snow slide. *Mujahideen* ambushes were usually deployed well above the column from both sides of the road. *Mujahideen* attacks on the convoys were characterized by: maximum effort to achieve surprise; skillful selection of ambush sites; well-prepared, excellently fortified and masterfully concealed ambush positions; well-prepared routes of withdrawal; processes for mining the roads including the shoulders and detour routes; and simultaneous attacks to destroy vehicles in several locations throughout the convoy to prevent maneuver and the movement of the convoy out of the kill zone. This was not the type of ambush which the

Soviets planned against and trained for in Europe. Soviet style ambushes in the European theater normally consisted of one to three tanks hidden along a likely enemy avenue of approach. The tanks would surprise the enemy, destroy as many enemy vehicles as possible and then withdraw under the cover of a smoke screen. Soviet forces were initially not prepared to deal with this new type of ambush, but their solution was the European solution--gain immediate fire superiority over the ambushing enemy.

The Soviets discovered that small-arms fire from the AK-74 assault rifle and the RPK-74 squad assault weapon was often ineffective against ambushes since their 5.45mm round is relatively short-ranged and lacks penetrating power against dug-in forces. The PKMS 7.62mm machine gun was somewhat better, but still lacked range and penetration. The Soviets found the ZSU 23-2 antiaircraft gun was ideal since it can be mounted on a BTR, BRDM or BMP armored personnel carrier³ or on a truck flat-bed and fires over 2,000 rounds per minute. The ZSU 23-2 could fire 23mm armor-piercing ammunition out to seven kilometers range. Usually, two or three ZSU 23-2 were included in a convoy. Their accuracy, high rate of fire, mobility and excellent angles of deflection and elevation made them welcome additions to the convoy.⁴

A supplement to the ZSU 23-2 was the AGS-17 automatic grenade launcher. The AGS-17 fires 30mm grenades out to a distance of 1.7 kilometers and compares very favorably with the U.S. Army 40mm automatic grenade launcher. The grenade has a 90% casualty rate within its seven-meter bursting radius. A trained gunner can fire over 90 rounds per minute. However, the issue tripod for the AGS-17 restricted its rapid deflection and elevation when mounted on a vehicle. The Tula Artillery Engineering School solved this problem by piggybacking the AGS-17 on top of the 12.7mm heavy machine gun and placing them both on the 6U6 antiaircraft machine gun mount.⁵ This mount provided maximum elevation and deflection for a very lethal, dual-capable weapons system.

The ultimate ambush buster, in Soviet experience, was a pair of attack helicopters flying to the aid of a beleaguered convoy. The Mi-24 attack helicopter (HIND) was the primary helicopter gunship. It is heavily armored, carries significant ordnance and was fairly responsive as long as a forward air controller accompanied the convoy.

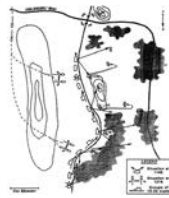
Too often, the Soviets tried to use fire power in the place of fire and maneuver. Soviet commanders were reluctant to dismount troops to break an ambush through close combat. The primary reason for this reluctance was that Soviet line units in Afghanistan were chronically understrength as disease, guard details and an imperfect personnel replacement system kept units at less than 66% of TO&E strength. Consequently, there were often only a few or no troops, aside from the crews, riding in the BTRs and BMPs. The Soviets lacked the available infantry to assault ambushes. The *mujahideen* recognized this reluctance and would often set up ambushes which fired from only one side of the road. Troops would dismount the BMPs and BTRs and shelter on the side away from *mujahideen* fire. The *mujahideen* would then detonate directional mines⁶ planted on the other side of the road and kill the Soviet soldiers sheltering from the ambush.

War stories

In November 1993, the author visited the Frunze Academy in Moscow and received a copy of their in-house volume on tactical lessons learned in Afghanistan. What follows are Soviet combat reports from their road warriors who escorted convoys along Afghanistan's roads.⁷ Frunze Academy commentary and the authors commentary are added to the end of each report.

Escorting a truck convoy from Kabul to Ghazni (Map 2) by Major V. I. Rovba⁸

At the end of 1981, guerrilla forces were very active in the province of Ghazni. Especially bitter combat was fought along the Ghazni-Kabul and Ghazni-Kandahar highways. The enemy paid special attention to mining the roads where convoys would pass.



The 9th MRC was stationed six kilometers west of Ghazni with our parent regiment.⁹ On 5 September, our company commander was ordered to provide an escort on the next day for an 80-vehicle convoy from Ghazni to Kabul. On 7 September, we would offload the cargo and would return on 8 September. Two motorized rifle platoons were detailed to provide security and convoy escort. The company commander would command the detail on an R-142 radio set from the regimental communications company.¹⁰ The route is 160 kilometers long.

The only preparation that the troops had for the mission was drawing their ammunition and cleaning their individual and crew-served weapons. The drivers pulled maintenance on their vehicles by themselves.

My company commander decided to keep the convoy together in one single column. He put a BTR in the lead of the convoy and two at the tail. He spaced the remaining BTRs between every 15 or 16 trucks in the convoy. Altogether, he committed seven BTRs to the mission. In the event that the *mujahideen* would attack a motorized rifle squad, each squad's BTR would pull over to the side of the road from which the enemy was firing and return fire with all its weapons. Thus, it would provide covering fire for the trucks driving out of the kill zone. Once the convoy was clear, the BTRs would rejoin the column and reoccupy their positions in the march column. Under no circumstances were we to allow the enemy to stop the column. It would be very difficult to get the convoy going again should it be stopped.

The road march to Kabul passed without incident. However, there was a delay in refilling the fuel trucks that constituted the bulk of the convoy back to Ghazni. The return trip was supposed to start at 0600 hours and finally got started at 1030 hours. We had sat on the outskirts of Kabul for four hours waiting for all of the fuel trucks. While we were waiting, individual Afghan trucks loaded with men and cargo continually passed by the entire convoy.

When the loaded fuel tankers finally arrived, they took their place in the convoy. The commander gave the order and the march began. After driving for an hour and a half, we entered the minor Kabul-river canyon and traveled through a green zone.¹¹ Three kilometers ahead of us was an Afghan Army post which guarded a river bridge. The presence of this post had a certain psychological effect and we relaxed our vigilance as we approached the post. The company commander's BTR and the truck with the R-142 radio set traveled at the front of the column. Right behind them was a fuel truck towing a broken-down fuel truck. Once the entire convoy was flanked by the green zone, the enemy opened fire on the lead vehicles with grenade launchers at a range of 25 to 30 meters. The fuel truck towing the other fuel truck was hit. Simultaneously, the enemy opened fire on the tail end of the convoy and knocked out a trail BTR with a RPG.

The escort vehicles reacted as they had been briefed and returned fire. The truck column began to drive out of the kill zone while the enemy was rattled by the return fire. The company commander radioed for air support and thirty minutes after the battle began, helicopter gunships arrived. They hit the enemy and supported the motorized riflemen in their battle. The enemy ceased fire and began to withdraw to fall-back positions. In this combat, we lost one soldier KIA and seven WIA.

FRUNZE COMMENTARY: This report shows insufficient preparation for the convoy duty and further insufficient preparation in its accomplishment. On the day before the mission, the company commander did not conduct training with his personnel including training on coordination of actions in the event of enemy attack. The prolonged wait along the road side permitted the enemy to closely study the convoy as he drove by the column. The use of helicopter gunships to cover the column from the air did not come soon enough to ward off the enemy attack. Reconnaissance was not used during the course of the march. Nevertheless, the high psychological preparation of the drivers and the selfless actions of the motorized rifle soldiers allowed the column to rapidly exit the kill zone.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY: In this report, the commander is taken to task for not carefully supervising the preparation of his troops for the march. Part of this criticism is based on lack of trust of subordinates and the lack of a Soviet professional NCO corps. The commander is expected to personally conduct all training. In armies with a professional NCO corps, such training and preparation is done by trained, seasoned sergeants who understand the unit missions and train their forces to meet them. The commander checks his sergeants, but does not have to get involved in training to the extent that his Soviet counterpart had to. This leaves more time for carefully planning the action. The Soviet system overburdened the company grade officers and limited individual training opportunities.

The essential communications for this convoy were all contained in a soft-bodied vehicle. If it had been hit, the convoy commander may not have received the belated air support.

An air assault company escorts a convoy in Konduz Province
(Map 3) by Major A. M. Portnov¹²

Enemy activity was a problem near Imam-Sahib in Konduz Province at the end of October 1981. The enemy would launch diversionary attacks against Soviet bases, while simultaneously trying to prevent the export of cotton from the cities of Shekravan and Imam-Sahib.¹³

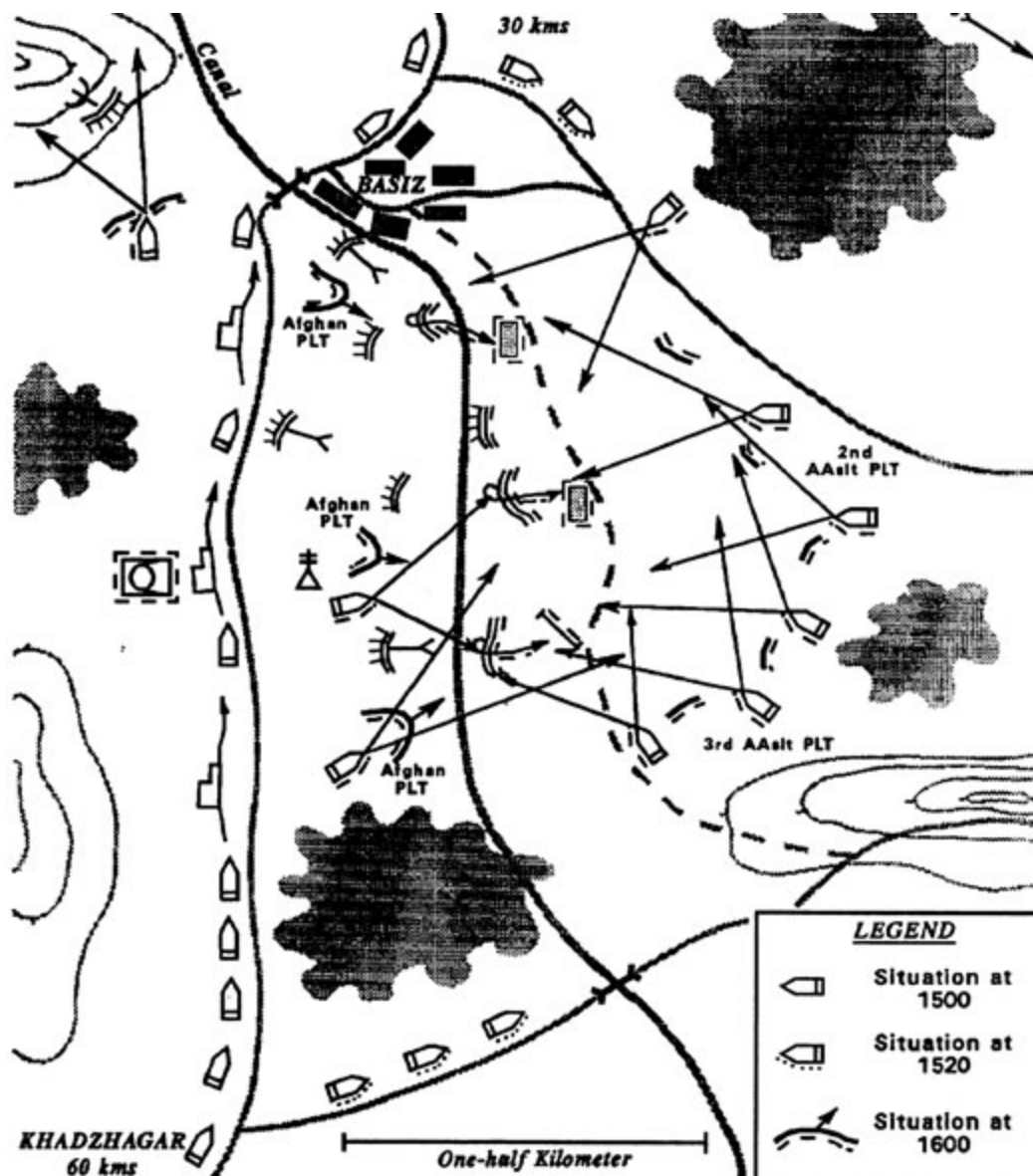
On 26 October 1981, I received an order to provide escort to a convoy of 70 trucks hauling cotton. My 7th Air Assault Company was to provide escort along the 114 kilometer route from Shekravan to Shirkhan. My company had two air assault platoons and was reinforced with a mortar platoon, a machine-gun squad, and two AGS-17 automatic grenade launchers mounted on BTR-D carriers.¹⁴

While preparing for the mission, I brought in all my officers, sergeants and drivers and we went over the route on a terrain model in detail. We developed several courses of action for each vehicle in the event of an enemy attack on the column. In my forward security patrol, I had two BMDs¹⁵ and a BTR-D mounting the AGS-17. They moved at one-kilometer intervals in front of the main body.

After the cotton was loaded, the convoy left Shekravan at 1200 hours on 27 October. I augmented my Soviet security force by putting three or four Afghan armed police from the "Sarandoy" company on each cotton truck. In the event of an attack on the convoy, the Afghan armed police would act under my command.

When our column approached Basiz village, the enemy fired on the forward security patrol¹⁶ with grenade launchers and blew up a command detonated mine¹⁷. The enemy was trying to destroy the bridge across the canal and the BTR-D that was on it. Thus, they hoped to stop the convoy. Thanks to the skilled handling by the driver of the BTR-D, it was not damaged. However, at the same time, the enemy was firing rifles and grenade launchers at the column from 70-100 meters away and knocked out four cotton trucks.

I ordered my forward security patrol (the 2nd Air Assault Platoon) and the 3rd Air Assault Platoon to maneuver behind the enemy and take him from the rear. The fires from one BMD, the AGS-17 crew and the mortar platoon were sufficient to pin down the enemy and allow the Afghan police company to assemble and deploy.



Having failed their mission, the enemy began to withdraw from prepared positions and came under fire from my platoons which had encircled them from the rear. The trapped guerrilla force continued to resist and we destroyed them. I had one air assault trooper wounded in my company.

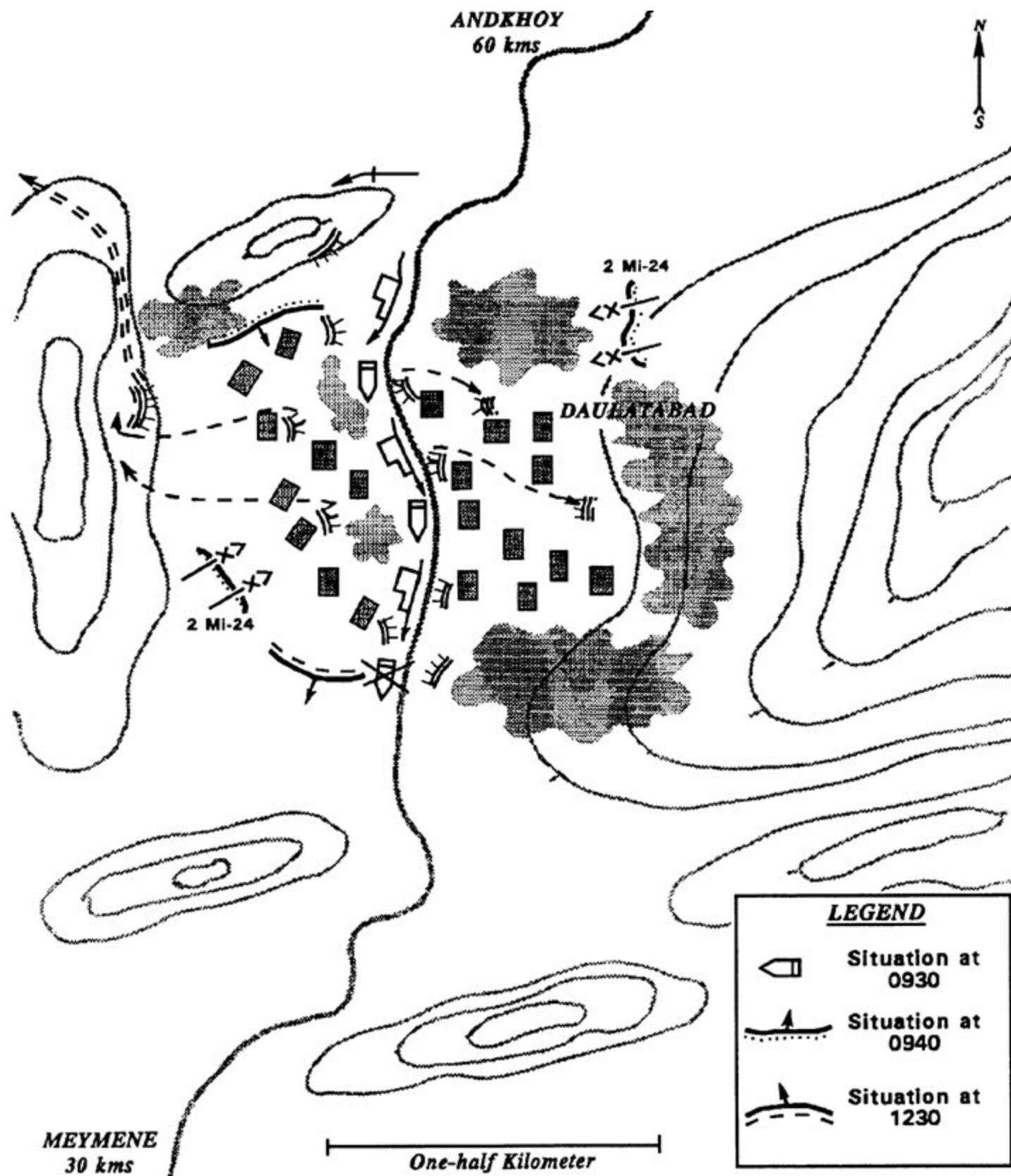
FRUNZE COMMENTARY: Combat experience shows that when preparing for a march, it is necessary to conduct coordination not only with your officers and sergeants, but with your armored-vehicle drivers as well. Your forward security patrol must not only have a route reconnaissance mission, but must also be instructed as to what actions to take when necessary in order to fight in coordination with the rest of the subunits. When combat is joined, it is necessary to maneuver subunits boldly to take the enemy on the flank and in the rear.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY: The column deployed a forward security patrol, but their reconnaissance effort seems lacking. Although they went over the route on a terrain model, it appears that planning was neglected and choke points and potential kill zones were not identified and planned for. The bridge is an obvious chokepoint and a place for reconnaissance elements to dismount and check for mines. Flank security is never discussed and evidently seldom deployed. Even if terrain precluded the use of ground flank security, aviation assets would have worked. On the other hand, this is a good example of aggressive action with a successful assault into the teeth of the ambush.

Convoy escort and combat in the village of Daulatabad
(Map 4) by LTC A. A. Agzamov¹⁸

At the end of 1981, enemy attacks against convoys mounted along the Termez, Sheberghan, Andkhoy, Meymene route. It was particularly difficult in the region of Daulatabad. Intelligence reports indicated that a guerrilla force of 25 to 30 men armed with rifles operated in this area. Acting secretly, the enemy would attack a single vehicle or column. Their goal was to paralyze resupply into the area.

On 2 December 1981, the 2nd Reconnaissance Company, which was garrisoned in Meymene, was ordered to escort a 120-vehicle convoy loaded with supplies from Andkhoy to Meymene. The distance was 110 kilometers. The company reinforcements included a sapper squad, a flamethrower squad armed with the RPO flamethrowers, a ZSU-23-4 self-propelled air defense gun, and a BTS-4 towing vehicle.¹⁹



We had two days to prepare for the mission. During this time we studied data which we received from the high command and resolved issues of rear support and maintenance support. We paid particular attention to readying the vehicles for the march and to preparing our weapons for combat. The troops drew rations and ammunition.

The convoy commander was the deputy commander of a *Spetsnaz* detachment, N. Beksultanov. He decided to conduct the march from Meymene to Andkhoy on a single route and precede this with a forward security patrol. At 0500 hours on 4 December, the column moved out and eleven hours later closed into the assembly area some three kilometers northeast of Andkhoy. The truck convoy, already loaded with supplies, joined us. We then had to arrange the march column, distribute our combat power throughout the convoy, agree on coordination measures, and arrange for our night rest stop. We planned to leave on the morning of 5 December, move for five or six hours covering 80 kilometers with one rest stop. Following an overnight rest, we would close into Meymene the following day. The company had a platoon serve as the forward patrol.

The column moved out at 0500 on the morning of 5 December. By 0900, the forward patrol reached the village of Daulatabad. They reported back that the village was deserted. This report put us on our guard, and the convoy commander ordered us to increase our observation. When the lead vehicles of the convoy began to exit Daulatabad village, the enemy opened fire with a grenade launcher and destroyed a BMP-2KSH²⁰ and a fuel tanker. A fire broke out and the vehicles immediately behind the conflagration were stuck in narrow streets.

The enemy opened up with small arms fire. Two more BMPs were knocked out and, as a result, the convoy was split into three sections. We returned fire, but it was not controlled or directed. The convoy commander lost control over his subunits since his communications were gone. Individual vehicles independently tried to break out of the kill zones. The FAC called in helicopter gunships and directed their fires. The helicopters began gun runs on the enemy in the village. In the meantime, the trail platoon received the mission to sweep the western part of the village. The dismounted troopers moved under the cover of BMP and helicopter fire to carry out their mission. The enemy withdrew when faced with this decisive action.

In the course of this three-hour battle, four of our soldiers were killed (all drivers), six were wounded, three BMPs were destroyed and five trucks were burned up.

FRUNZE COMMENTARY: This report shows poor decision-making, inadequate preparation for battle and inadequate troop control during the course of the battle. None of the commanders involved had been briefed on the probable sites of enemy contact and the likely enemy courses of action.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY: In this report, the recon element reports that all the people in a village, which is a traditional trouble spot, have left. This leads to increased observation, but the commander does not dismount a force and have them probe the village for ambushes. This appears to demonstrate a basic lack of field craft on the part of the commander.

Again, the company commander muddles through a three-hour battle with a lightly-armed platoon and only manages to extricate himself when airpower is brought to bear. There seems to

be a strong reluctance to dismount and close with the enemy. There is an over-reliance on firepower.

The *mujahideen* learned to take out command vehicles early in the battle. Command vehicles were always distinguished by extra antennae and convoy commanders usually rode in the first vehicle of the main column. Other Soviet writings talk about strapping extra antennae on all vehicles before going into action and varying the commander's position in the column. This did not happen. Consequently, when the commander's vehicle was hit, communications were usually lost and the commander, if he survived, could not control the fight. The Soviets used radio almost exclusively to control the battle. Although the *mujahideen* had little jamming capability, once they knocked out the Soviet vehicles with the multiple antennae, they usually had disrupted the tactical control net.

Finally, Afghan government forces and Afghan civilian drivers are never part of the equation. Losses are strictly in terms of Soviet men and material and trucks from the convoy. Either the Afghans never suffered casualties, or they were considered of no account. If it is the latter, it demonstrates a mindset that is counterproductive when trying to assist another government in winning a guerrilla war.

Convoy escort and battle near Maliykhel' (Map 5) by Major A. I. Guboglo²¹

During the winter of 1982, several guerrilla detachments worked near the village of Maliykhel' on the Kabul-Ghazni highway. The guerrillas would launch attacks on Soviet military convoys.

On the 11th of December 1982, the commander of the 7th Motorized Rifle Company received orders to escort a truck convoy from Gazni to Kabul and return.²² They were to insure the unimpeded movement of the convoy in both directions on the 170 kilometer stretch.

The road march to Kabul went as planned and the enemy did not try to attack the convoy. After loading the trucks, we were prepared for our return trip to Gazni. My company commander decided to place two BTRs at the head and two BTRs at the tail of the column and then intersperse five BTRs within the truck column. He put a BTR between every eight trucks. He had the 1st MRP serve as a reconnaissance platoon and move ten kilometers in front of the convoy. The average road speed of the convoy would be 35-40 kilometers per hour. There would be one rest stop at the end of three hours driving.

In case the enemy would attack the column with small arms, the BTRs and helicopter gunships would place maximum firepower on the enemy while the convoy moved out of the kill zone. As a variant, should the terrain permit, the BTRs would roll right over the ambush sites of the attacking enemy.

At 0730 hours on 13 December, my company commander gave the order and the convoy moved out. After thirty minutes of travel, one of our heavy-transport trucks broke down. My company commander had another transport truck link up with this vehicle and tow it right behind his command BTR at the front of the column. At 1115 hours, the lead vehicles of the main body

approached the green zone near the village of Maliykhel'. As the vehicles crossed the river bridge, the enemy activated a radio-controlled, command-detonated mine which damaged the towing vehicle. The passage was blocked. At that instant, the enemy opened fire on the convoy from positions on the dominant heights.

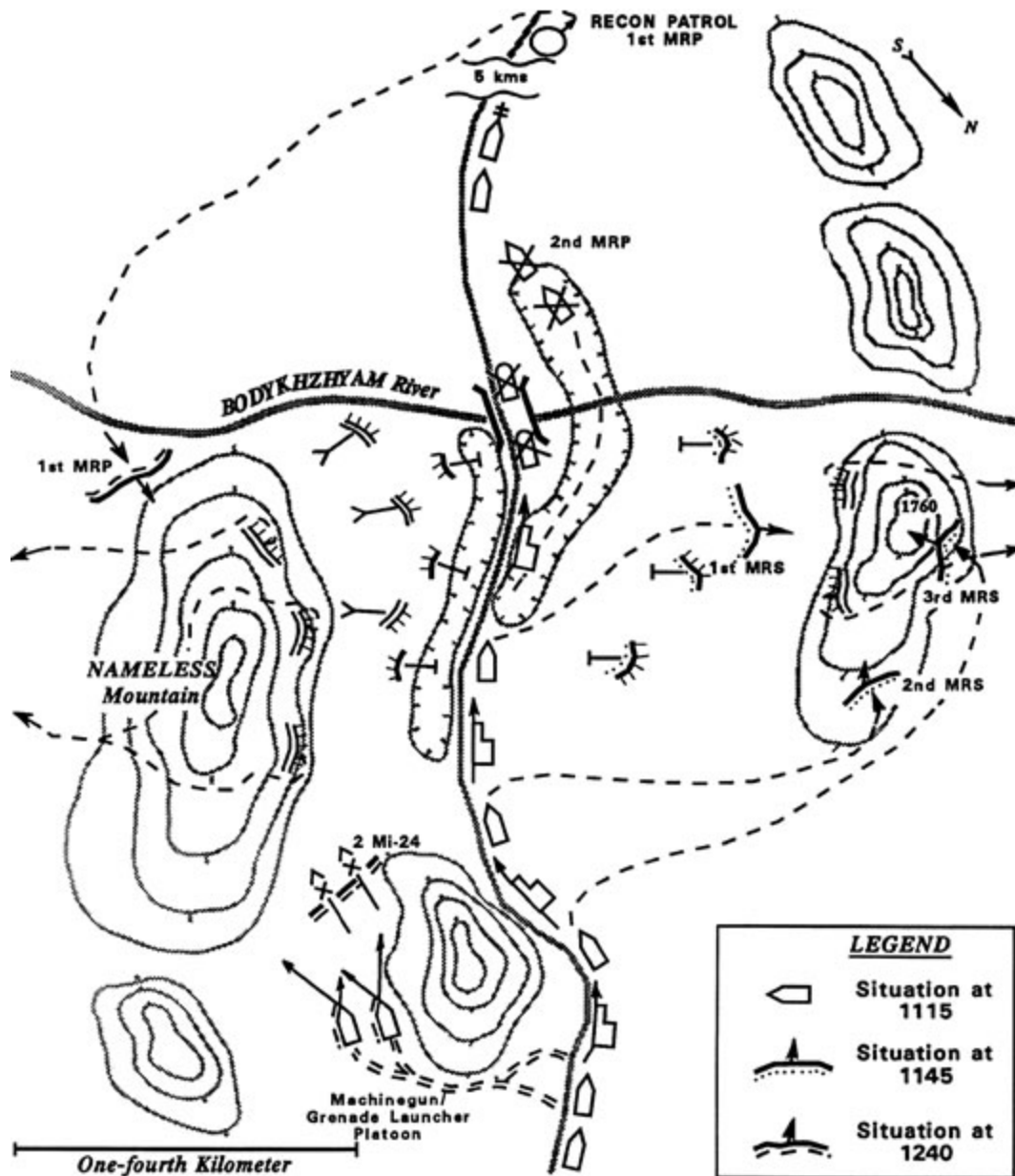
Attempts to push the trucks off the bridge failed. The company commander decided to have his 2nd Motorized Rifle Platoon flank the bridge site through a gully. However, the enemy had mined the exit from the gully. The 2nd platoon's lead BTR hit a mine. Attempts to extricate this BTR failed, and while they were trying, another BTR hit another mine. Taking stock of his increasingly untenable situation, the company commander ordered the 3rd Motorized Rifle Platoon to dismount and take hill 1760. This was my platoon. I maneuvered my first squad into a position where they could pin down the enemy with fire from the front. Then, I took my 2nd and 3rd squads to flank the enemy and hit him from the flank and rear. By 1145, we had successfully accomplished our mission and hill 1760 was ours.

During this time, our force continued attempts to retake the road and move the convoy to a safe place. However, due to the intense fire from "Nameless" mountain, we were unsuccessful. The approaches to the mountain were wide-open and a flanking attack did not appear possible. Despite our heavy small arms and BTR fire plus the repeated gun runs by helicopter gunships on the height, we were not able to take it.

Finally, the company commander's radio requests resulted in an additional flight of helicopter gunships. The commander decided to attack the enemy with the 1st platoon, which had originally acted as the recon platoon. At 1240 hours, the 1st platoon attacked. It was supported by fire from the machine-gun/ grenade-launcher platoon and a flight of helicopter gunships. It took the hill. The convoy could now resume its march.

FRUNZE COMMENTARY: This report shows that it is always necessary to "wargame" several variants for your subunits in the event of an enemy attack. Further, sapper subunits should always be a part of a convoy escort along with the motorized rifle force. And, again we see how good combat training of the troops leads to success in battle, regardless of how difficult the situation is.

AUTHOR'S COMMENTARY: The companies in this report and the first report are from the same battalion. There is a year's difference between the two incidents. It is reasonable to check for improvements and a learning curve. There appears to have been some tactical improvements made in this time. The force now moves with a reconnaissance force forward and with more responsive air cover. But, the commander still rides in the lead vehicle, bridges are not checked for mines, and likely ambush sites are not probed by dismounted forces. Broken-down convoy vehicles are still towed at the front of the column right behind the command vehicle. There is no apparent attempt to control dominant terrain or check it before the convoy's advance. There is no discussion of using air assault forces to leapfrog from one dominant height to the next to cover the convoy's movement. Apparently, not all the lessons on convoy escort had been learned.



And in conclusion

The War in Afghanistan was a brutal experience for the Soviets. Some of their problems, such as the lack of a professional NCO corps, were self-inflicted. In convoy escort, they did not take steps western armies take. Although Soviet engineers would sweep the roads for mines, there seemed to be no road-opening force on these routes. Evidently, there are no "bait-and-hunt" decoy convoys. Rapid reaction forces supporting the convoy escorts are not apparent. There is no evidence of any planning to use airmobile forces on likely guerrilla escape routes. Artillery and mortar fire support planning also seems absent. These examples fail to show map and terrain work to identify chokepoints, kill zones and ambush sites in advance. Reconnaissance forces seem road-bound. The effort appears passive and reactive. If the Soviets had been fighting a more modernized guerrilla force, such as those in former Yugoslavia, their enemy would be

more capable of exploiting communications and possibly wreaking even greater havoc on the convoys.



















Some of the key lessons of the Soviet experience in Afghanistan are:

1. Armored vehicles are necessary for convoy escort forces and communications. Fire power is an essential component of convoy escort, but sufficient forces for dismounted combat are also necessary.
2. Planning and coordination for convoy escort is an involved and necessary process. Possible ambush sites must be identified and cleared prior to the arrival of the convoy. Preemption of ambushes is preferable to immediate action drills.
3. Convoy escort requires dedicated units which train specifically for convoy escort. Part of that training includes standard drills for preempting ambushes and immediate action drills.
4. Route reconnaissance must include flanks, must secure high ground and must check potential ambush sites as it travels. Reconnaissance elements should be reinforced with additional ground elements as well as air elements.
5. Engineer assets should accompany convoys.
6. Air and artillery support must be planned and readily available throughout the route.
7. A rapid reaction force is a necessary part of overall security for a convoy. This force may work with the reconnaissance element to seize high ground and chokepoints. The rapid reaction force must plan and coordinate with the convoy escort. The rapid reaction force and convoy escort force should jointly train in drills and maneuver.
8. Predictability in execution of convoy escort procedures is an invitation for disaster.

No guerrilla war is identical to another, yet the principles and tactics remain remarkably similar. The U.S. Army has developed good SOPs and procedures for convoy escort, but the lessons that the Soviets learned should still be studied and applied to our army and to other armies we may work with in future alliances.

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MAP SYMBOLS

 SMALL ARMS	 BTR	 MORTAR
 LIGHT MACHINE GUN	 UNARMORED VEHICLE	 ARTILLERY FIRE CONCENTRATION
 HEAVY MACHINE GUN	 TRUCK	 ARTILLERY FIRE PROTECTIVE FIRES
 LAW	 RECON PATROL	 COMPANY COMMAND POST
 SECTOR OF FIRE	 DEFENSIVE POSITION	 BUILDING
 BMP or BMD	 ATTACK HELICOPTER STRIKE	 BRIDGE

Endnotes

1. Aleksandr Lyakhovskiy, **Tragediya i doblest' Afgana!** [The tragedy and valor of the Afghan veteran], manuscript awaiting publication in Russia and being translated for publication in English.

2. *Spetsnaz* are "forces of special designation" or special troops and can include a variety of branches and jobs. The highly-trained, hardened *spetsnaz* who performed long-range reconnaissance, commando and special forces functions are those referred to here. At one time, the Soviet Union had 17 brigades of such troops.

3. BMPs are tracked combat vehicles which carry a three-man crew and a squad of eight soldiers.. The BMP-1 (*Boevaya mashina pekhoty*) first appeared in 1967 and mounts a 73mm cannon, a 7.62mm machine gun and an antitank missile. The BMP-2 is an upgrade of the BMP-1 and substitutes a 30mm automatic gun for the 73mm cannon and carries a different antitank missile and launcher. The BTR or *bronetransporter* is an eight-wheeled armored personnel carrier which can carry up to an 11-man squad. It mounts a 14.5mm and a 7.62mm machine gun and can carry antitank weapons as well. The BRDM is a four-wheeled armored car which is used primarily for reconnaissance. It has two auxiliary wheels for extra mobility. In its' various configurations, it carries either a 12.7mm machine gun and a 7.62mm machine gun or a 14.5mm and a 7.62mm machine gun.

4. Yu. Danilov, "**Pov'shaya effektivnost' ognya**" [Improving fire effectiveness], *Armeyskiy sbornik* [Army digest], September 1994, 38-39.

5. Ibid, 39.

6. Similar to the U.S. Army Claymore mine.

[7.](#) The author translated the book, added other examples and provided analysis and commentary for his book *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Tactics and Tactical Lessons Learned during their War in Afghanistan*. The book should be published in 1995 by NDU Press. The reports are from this book.

[8.](#) V. I. Rovba served in Afghanistan from 1981 to 1983 as the platoon leader of a motorized rifle platoon. He was awarded the medal "For Bravery".

[9.](#) 9th MRC, 3rd Battalion, 191st Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment.

[10.](#) The R-142 radio system is actually a R-130 shortwave radio, two R-111 medium-range FM radios and one R-123 short-range FM radio mounted on a GAZ-66 truck. The R-142 can communicate over distance and with helicopter aviation.

[11.](#) Green zones are irrigated areas thick with trees, crops, irrigation ditches and tangled vegetation. It was difficult to move personnel carriers through the green zone.

[12.](#) A. M. Portnov served in Afghanistan from 1979-1982 as the assistant company commander of an air assault company and then as the company commander of an air assault company. He was awarded the "Order of the Red Star" and the medal "For Military Valor".

[13.](#) Both cities bordered the Soviet Union and cotton was one of the commodities with which the Afghan government paid the Soviet government for their aid. Afghan export of cotton to the Soviet Union started with an agreement in the 1930s in exchange for Soviet gasoline and manufactured goods. Cotton was only a small part of Afghan exports to pay for Soviet arms. Natural gas, uranium, precious stones, fruit and other resources were also sent north.

[14.](#) Soviet airborne forces always had a full complement of air-droppable vehicles. Soviet airborne were fully mechanized forces who could arrive by air. Soviet airborne forces in Afghanistan were supplemented with additional, roomier vehicles such as the BTR and BMP.

[15.](#) BMD or boevaya mashina desanta is an air-droppable armored personnel carrier which carries up to nine men (usually a maximum of seven). It has the same turret as the BMP, so the BMD-1 has the 73mm cannon of the corresponding BMP-1 while the BMD-2 has the 30mm chain gun of the corresponding BMP-2. They both mount three 7.62mm machine guns. They were widely used by Soviet airborne and air assault forces.

[16.](#) The forward security patrol was a standard element in a Soviet advance guard battalion. It was normally a reinforced company which moved ten kilometers behind the combat reconnaissance patrol. Its mission was to insure that the main force moved unhindered.

[17.](#) The Russian here is fugas, similar to the western word fougasse. The Russian term means a large explosive charge buried in the ground and covered with rocks and debris. The western term describes a flame weapon which is a buried 55-gallon drum of thickened gasoline with a propelling explosive charge at the base.

[18.](#) A. Agzamov served in Afghanistan in 1981-1983 as the commander of a reconnaissance group of a reconnaissance company. He was awarded the "Order of the Red Star".

[19.](#) The BTS-4 [bronirovanny tyagach sredniy] is a turretless T-55 tank equipped for towing tracked vehicles.

[20.](#) BMP-2KSH is the command version of the BMP-2 series.

[21.](#) A. I. Guboglo served in Afghanistan from 1981 to 1983 as a motorized rifle platoon leader. He was awarded the "Order of the Red Star" and the medal "For Valor".

[22.](#) 7th MRC, 3rd MRB, 191st Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment.